



Collecting and Painting Vancouver's History



By Jurian ter Horst

Tom Carter with his huge 2018 painting set in the 1940s looking west across False Creek and Vancouver, a commission for Chip Wilson's corporate office. **PHOTO BY CHRISTIAN NICOLAY**

“Those who came to Vancouver back in the day were the ones who had nowhere else to go.” Early on in our conversation, Tom Carter suddenly brought up this gloomy historical

This month's speaker:
Tom Carter

perspective on the city. It's an interesting statement coming from a man whose positive energy spreads throughout the room when talking about his three biggest passions: art, entertainment and history – ideally, all three together in the same conversation.

Yet, it shouldn't really come as a surprise either: in his vistas of the city, set in the 1940s and '50s, the neon theatre lights, colourful cigarette or pop soda advertisements, and flashy old-time cars stand in striking contrast with the

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President's Notes

We are going to have a few board vacancies as of our Annual General Meeting, which we will hold by Zoom on a day to be announced in mid-May. Are you interested ?

We are a working board, meaning that everyone takes on some administrative role or perhaps a project agreed upon by the group. The time commitment isn't onerous: we host a lecture eight times a year on the 4th Thursday of the month, excluding June, July, August and December, at the Museum of Vancouver, which most board members attend. We meet once a month at 5:30 on the first Thursday, in the boardroom at the MoV, taking a summer break in July and August; those meetings last an hour and a half and most of us then walk over to the Billy Bishop Legion on Laburnum to chat about the state of the universe. We've been a very convivial group for as long as I've been involved – sometimes I think we're a group of friends who happen to run a historical society rather than a board of directors who have become friends.

If this tweaks your interest, please send me a note at the email address below, and our vice-president Jan Fialkowski and I will follow up. Include in it what you think you would like to do for the Vancouver Historical Society. There are ongoing projects that founder from time to time because, well, we're just too busy in our private lives – I'm thinking about youth engagement strategies and maintaining and updating our own records – as well as "named" positions.

A formal call for nominations and notice of the Annual General Meeting will be included in the May newsletter.

–Michael Kluckner, presidentvhs@gmail.com

Upcoming Events

Our lectures take place at the Museum of Vancouver. For those not wishing to attend in person, the lectures will be broadcast live on the Vancouver Historical Society's YouTube channel, subject to technical difficulties.

May 25, 2023

Reckless Riders and Reckless Writers: Cycling Accidents in The News Since 1886

John Belshaw

A historian, a cyclist, and a Vancouverite, John Belshaw studies the history of cycling in Vancouver. Exploring three accidents involving bicycles – one each from 1900, 1952, and 1981 – Belshaw uses newspaper coverage to show how cycling, being a cyclist, and understandings of accidents changed over a century.

Spring-Summer Field Trips

An Event with the City of Vancouver Archives

Full details to appear in the May and June newsletters

- June 14th, in the morning: there will be a special tour of the Archives for 30 VHS members.
- July, date TBA, a tour of the "Dressed for History" costume exhibition at the Museum of Vancouver with Ivan Sayers.
- August, date TBA, a tour of the Orpheum arranged by Bill Allman of the Entertainment Hall of Fame, with a visit to its Wurlitzer organ conducted by Tom Carter.

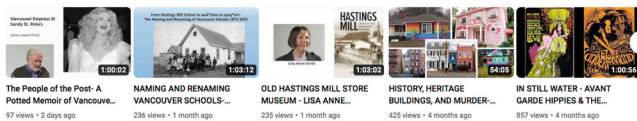
Welcome to new VHS Members

Lindsay Fernandes
Colleen Hardwick
Diane Jones

Heather Lewin
Peter Loppe

Search for our video archive at "Vancouver Historical Society on YouTube"

Videographer: Elwin Xie



The Archives' 90th Birthday Celebration

Readers who are on social media should follow the fascinating posts every day on the City of Vancouver Archives' pages. They are highlighting parts of the collection with some great photos.

90 Days
90 Posts
90th Anniversary

Follow the City of Vancouver Archives on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter Mar 15-Jun 12



Vancouver Historical Society Executive Board: 2022 - 2023

(ELECTED MAY 24, 2022)

- PRESIDENT Michael Kluckner
- VICE PRESIDENT Jan Fialkowski
- TREASURER Tom Carter
- RECORDING SECRETARY Helen Van Wel
- DIRECTOR (PROGRAMS) John Belshaw
- DIRECTOR (COMMUNICATIONS) Robert Sanzalone
- DIRECTOR (FIELD TRIPS) Brenda Peterson
- DIRECTOR (YOUTH OUTREACH) Jurian ter Horst
- DIRECTOR Lynn Copeland

Appointed Positions

- MEMBERSHIP Mary Wallace Poole
- VIDEOGRAPHY Elwin Xie
- NEWSLETTER MAILING Michael O'Hagan
- NEWSLETTER TEMPLATE/LAYOUT Kellan Higgins/MK

CONTACT

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dark clouds that hang over *his* Vancouver (more about this later).

Tom Carter is an artist, collector, and Board member of VHS (and many other organizations!). He moved to Vancouver from Surrey 20 years ago, and more or less by accident rolled into researching Vancouver's history.

TC: "I was having breakfast with my father at a restaurant on Broadway that had a good view north across False Creek over the city, when he casually pointed towards the Downtown Eastside and mentioned that my grandfather had a café on Hastings in the early 1930s. I'd never heard about it and asked when he left and Dad said "after they bombed a theatre and the ticket office flew through his front window." He didn't know anything more than that so I had to start digging to find the story! At that point there wasn't much online so I learned how to research at the VPL Special Collections and at the Vancouver Archives. I discovered the Royal Theatre on Hastings was bombed during the night of March 20th 1933 and the café across the street was the Vancouver Cafe & Grill (later the Common Gold)."

Also by accident, Tom Carter started collecting relics, about a decade ago, from old theatres that were to be demolished. While he has always been a collector, the scheduled demolition of the 1907 Pantages Theatre on East Hastings Street in 2011 took him into an entirely new direction.

TC: "The first entertainment-related things I collected were recordings. I've always loved early music – I had classical piano training and played ragtime as a kid. I inherited my grandmother's 78s when I was about 10 years old and fell in love with her music – 1920s and '30s jazz, big band swing, that sort of thing. When other kids were collecting hockey cards, I was spending my allowance at flea markets on 78s!

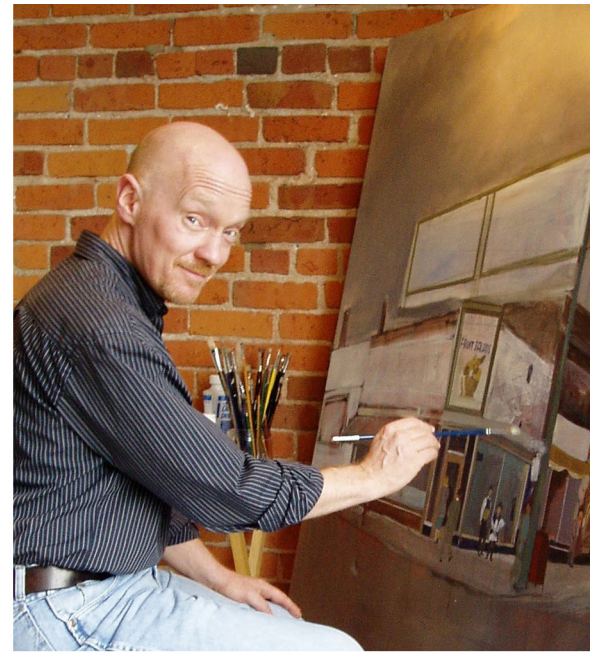
"I discovered Vancouver labels like Aragon and then radio transcription discs

from stations like CKMO, CKLG, and CKNW. Back in the '70s these actually showed up at flea markets and I was mesmerized by local music and broadcast history.

"I had already started picking up nightclub ephemera and the odd theatre program when I stumbled into the Pantages demolition, which was really by accident. I was introduced to the demolition guys by John Atkin and at first just wanted to have a few pieces to remember it by. Of course, as soon as I realized anything I didn't buy would be destroyed, I had to get it all! Word got around I was rescuing some things and people started calling me up to offer things they couldn't bear to see thrown out."

Through his paintings and theatre collections, Tom Carter has been able to, as he calls it, reclaim some of Vancouver's history. His paintings of the city are, consciously, not always 100% historically accurate: they tell the narrative of a Vancouver that *he* thinks of – a Vancouver that through his father's and grandfather's stories, and his own research, has become *his* Vancouver. The same goes for his theatre memorabilia: his collection of objects tell the stories of nightclubs and theatres that once thrived in Vancouver – *that* Vancouver is *his* Vancouver.

TC: "Vancouver has had such a transient population and gone through so many building booms over the years that the evidence of colourful lives and wonderful stories gets swept away pretty regularly. Through digging into my own family's time here I reconnected with the city as I remember it feeling in the early '70s before it started disappearing. My paintings of Vancouver are my way of recovering something previously lost and re-



claiming it. The collecting and salvaging I've done of actual artifacts has gone hand-in-hand with the painting, as has meeting so many people I'd call "historical figures" who have kindly shared their stories. Sometimes these stories have actually been triggered by my paintings, which I love. Little by little I hope to reclaim this city of fascinating stories and inspiring people."

On April 27th, come to the MoV to hear Tom talk about his remarkable and varied career and interests.

Above: Tom Carter at the easel.
Below: On Tom Carter's apartment floor, the soft golds and pinks of plasterwork rescued from the first Pantages Theatre on East Hastings Street before its demolition in 2011.



The Incorporation Day Social at UBC Golf Club



PHOTOGRAPH BY COLLEEN HARDWICK

Our social event on April 2nd, the first ‘non-lecture’ gathering since our last luncheon in 2019, was highlighted by the presentation of our Award of Merit to Musqueam artist Susan Point, who was to have received the award in 2020 when we were shut down by Covid. About 40 members and guests enjoyed conversation and canapés. It was great to see members old and new, and special guests City Archivist Heather Gordon, Bill Allman of the BC Entertainment Hall of Fame, Maurice Guibord of the BC Francophone Historical Society, and Jill Kelly of the Friends of the Archives.



Award of Merit 2023

Presented to: Susan Point

For her outstanding art, which has reintroduced a Coast Salish sensibility to public spaces in the City of Vancouver, and is a reminder of the full history of the region.



PHOTOGRAPH BY CHRISTINE ALLEN